



PG. 6

NATIVE COFFEE CO. BELIEVES IN THE RIDICULOUS

THE MERCURY



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PG. 6

ROCK OUT TO SILENT DISCO

UTDMERCURY.COM



# Graduate student sentenced to six years prison for animal cruelty



SHUBHANKAR KAWLE

ANDRÉ AVERION  
Mercury Staff

FATIMAH AZEEM  
Editor-In-Chief

UTD graduate student Shubhankar Kawle was sentenced to six and a half years in prison on Aug. 3 for torturing two house cats, one of which had to be euthanized due to severe injuries. Kawle was charged with cruelty to non-

livestock animals, which is a third-degree felony in the state of Texas when it involves torture, serious bodily injury or death. Kawle was taken into immediate custody upon the conclusion of his trial at the Hunt County Courthouse, 354th District Court. The Hunt County police department began an investigation in October 2021 after receiving a complaint of animal cruelty at a residence in Quinlan, Texas. The unnamed source installed house cameras after notic-

ing their cats were returning home severely injured, to the point of one cat needing their leg amputated. On Oct. 9, investigators obtained footage of Kawle kidnapping one cat and torturing it for five hours with a metal rod. The animal sustained severe injuries and was euthanized hours later. Kawle was arrested Oct. 20, 2021 on campus by UTDPD after Texas Chief Investigator Courtney Burns filed an arrest warrant. From there, he was transported to Lew Ster-

rett Jail in Dallas County but was released under a bond of \$50,000 shortly afterwards. After being released, Kawle continued to work at the UT Dallas Testing Center as a proctor and contributed to research in soft robotics and control systems under professor Yonas Tadesse's Humanoid, Biorobotics and Smart Systems Lab. *The Mercury will continue to gather information on the crime and publish a detailed report on Sept. 18.*

# COMET CRUISER KICKS IT INTO HIGH GEAR



HRIDYA DHULIPALA | MERCURY STAFF

## 883 EAST LINE FREQUENCY INCREASES THROUGH FALL SEMESTER AS PART OF PILOT PROGRAM

JACK SIERPUTOWSKI  
News Editor

After negotiations between DART and UTD, on Aug. 7 the Comet Cruiser east line began running every 15 minutes on weekdays instead of every 30 minutes. Following years of high ridership, the pilot program will run until Dec. 20, at which point UTD and DART will evaluate if the frequency increase solves crowding problems; until then, the 883 East Express line, which used to run directly from Rutford Avenue to CityLine, is discontinued. The change comes after a ridership shift from the west line to the east line — according to figures shared by Director of Parking and Transportation Cristian Aquino in the Aug. 9 Staff Council General Meeting — and was influenced by recent student advocacy efforts. “We are confident that we’ll be able to extend [the pilot] once we review ridership, because we know that the ridership is there,” Aquino said. Linicha Hunter, a project manager with DART, is the sole planner for the



CONNOR HULLA | COURTESY

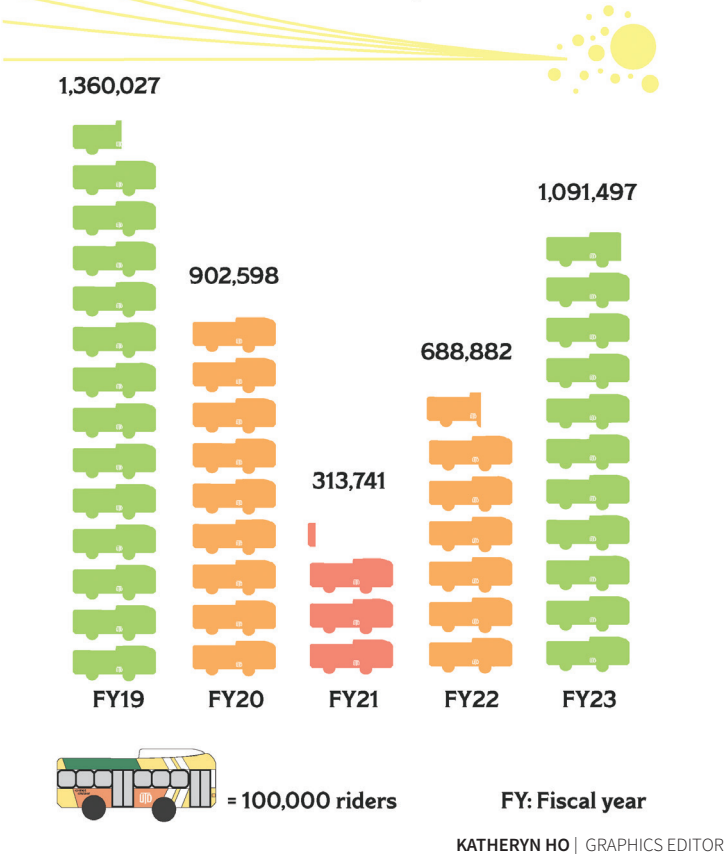
**Typical overcrowding conditions on the 883 East route, as documented by alumnus Connor Hulla.**

883 route, though she also coordinates with contractor ECHO and DART’s procurement and paratransit services. Initially, the 883 East route operated at a 20-minute frequency; in August 2016, the timing was increased to 30 minutes after ridership shifted to the west line. In recent years, demand for the east line

has once again increased, which Hunter attributed to new housing development along the east line, the end of the COVID-19 pandemic and UTD’s increasing number of students. Today, the 883 is the DART bus route with the highest ridership in the entire DFW metroplex, followed by the 57 and the 22, which both operate at 15-minute peak frequency. Hunter said that the next few months of observation will help DART and UTD decide if the frequency increase is necessary, or if the overcrowding might stem from students waiting “[until] the last minute to board the vehicle to get to school.” “Right now, it’s a pilot, so this is not permanent,” Hunter said. “And [we’re] looking to see ... does it make it better for the students?” Hunter said that DART had noticed ridership increasing after the COVID-19 pandemic; statistics shared by Aquino showed that Comet Cruiser ridership more than doubled in the last two

SEE 883, PAGE 10

Comet Cruiser annual ridership from 2019 to 2023



KATHERYN HO | GRAPHICS EDITOR



TEJAL DHAN | MANAGING EDITOR

**A mystery box of food from Custer Donut.**

## Too Good To Go app offers restaurant food at a discount

UNAIZA KHAKOO  
Mercury Staff

Convenient, cheap, and sustainable, the Too Good To Go app is a must have for college students looking to fill their stomachs without emptying their bank accounts. Too Good To Go, a mobile app, allows its customers to buy discounted bags of leftover goods from local restaurants. Started in Copenhagen, Denmark in 2016, the company aims to connect customers to restaurants to

SEE APP, PAGE 10

## Noel Miller and Brandi Denise entertain Comets

TEJAL DHAN  
Managing Editor

YouTuber and comedian Noel Miller, along with actress and comedian Brandi Denise, visited UTD on Aug. 30 to perform stand-up comedy free of cost to students. The show was organized by SUAAB’s Meteor Theater, which has in the past brought to campus recognizable names such as Bill Nye and Hasan Minhaj. With almost 1,000 people in attendance, the show brought Comets two hours of laughter.

Miller — best known for his YouTube channel which gained popularity through his “That’s Cringe” series with YouTuber Cody Ko — performed at UTD as part of his ongoing “Everything is F#&cked” tour, which has lasted over a year and a half and spans several countries. In addition to YouTube and stand-up comedy, Miller is collaborated with Ko through TMG studios on both music and a podcast. Older fans of Miller might even remember his

SEE MILLER, PAGE 10



KAZI SHAFIN | PHOTO EDITOR

Comets waited in line for more than hour to watch comedian and actress Brandi Denise (left) and YouTuber Noel Miller (right) in SUAAB’s Meteor Theater.

## Comet brings home Marine Corps honors

AAFIYA ASLAM  
Mercury Staff

Computer science senior Jocelyn Heckenkamp graduated from Marine Corps Base Quantico in summer 2023 alongside 67 female graduates, considered the largest platoon of senior female candidates in history. Heckenkamp had the highest GPA overall in the Platoon Leaders Course, or PLC, and graduated with honors. PLC is one of

three methods of joining the Marine Corps as an officer, and it is the only branch that lets students complete training over the summer while still in college. Her award will also bring a Commandant’s trophy to UTD — which is the highest ranking general in the Marine Corps — for the first time. “It’s definitely a huge honor,” Heck-

SEE MARINES, PAGE 10



SERGEANT BEN LOCKLEAR | COURTESY

Heckenkamp in the Quigley, an infamous swamp used as a Marine obstacle course.



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**Corrections/Clarifications**  
Bring factual errors or inaccuracies to the attention of *The Mercury*'s staff by emailing editor@utdm Mercury.com or calling (972) 883-2287 and a correction will be published in this space in a future issue.

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# UTDPD Blotter

## August 20

- At 1:00 p.m. an act of criminal mischief was reported



## August 20

- At 10:00 p.m., an individual was caught with possession of drug paraphernalia.



## August 21

- At a time between 8/17 and 8/18 a theft occurred.



## August 22

- At 7:44 p.m. an accident occurred upon striking an unattended vehicle.



## August 25

- At 12:54 a.m. an unauthorized user of a motor vehicle was placed under warrant arrest.



### LEGEND



VEHICULAR INCIDENT



THEFT



DRUGS & ALCOHOL



OTHER



## Meet the Editors Behind The Mercury Newspaper

Our editors at *The Mercury* aim to put out an information and interesting publication for UTD students throughout the rest of this year.

### FATIMAH AZEEM



Fatimah Azeem is a psychology senior from Dallas, Texas. She's been working at *The Mercury* since she was a freshman, starting off as a staff writer, and then moving on to Opinion Editor and Managing Editor before becoming the Editor-in-Chief in the summer of 2023. In addition to leading the newspaper's staff and operations, she also writes, designs, and occasionally takes photos, some of which she's won awards for from the Texas Intercollegiate Press Association and College Media Association, the statewide and national journalism competitions *The Mercury* submits content to. She hopes to pursue a post-graduate degree to eventually combine a career in life sciences and medicine with journalism; she looks forward to putting out an interesting and informative publication for students this year with her team.

### KHUE VU



Khue Vu is a computer science junior. He started his journey with *The Mercury* in the spring of 2022 as a photographer before becoming Photo Editor, and is now Web Editor. Once he graduates, he plans on becoming a software engineer and doing photography as a freelancer.

### TEJAL DHAN



Tejal Dhan is an information technology and systems sophomore. She first started working at *The Mercury* in February 2023 before becoming the Life & Arts Editor, and then the Managing Editor. She initially joined *The Mercury* because she wanted to get more familiar with campus activities, and then she started to enjoy learning the process of newspaper design.

### KAZI SHAFIN



Kazi Shafin is an information technology senior and the former President of UTD's Photography Club. Kazi joined *The Mercury* to connect with fellow photography enthusiasts and contribute to the community's growth and is the current Photo Editor. He has owned a thriving photography business for the last seven years and was also featured in a local newspaper called Shoutout DFW that supports small businesses. He serves as an instructor for Gloria Shields Summer Workshops. His ultimate goal is working for fashion magazines or as a Director of Photography on film sets.

### JACK SIERPUTOWSKI



Jack Sierputowski is a psychology senior, originally from Cleveland, OH. He first joined *The Mercury* as a staff writer in 2022, although he also served as the Opinion Editor and Editor-in-Chief before becoming News Editor. During the week, Jack works in the Personality and Interpersonal Relationships Lab on campus and hopes to pursue graduate studies to become a therapist.

### MARIA SHAIKH



Maria Shaikh is a biochemistry sophomore and has been Copy Editor for *The Mercury* since spring 2023. When not heckling writers over em dashes, she can be found managing Bujo Buddies UTD, participating in fan events, and yearning for a world in which the Oxford comma returns to news media. She hopes to work in healthcare and raise pet pigeons someday.

### MIA NGUYEN



Mia Nguyen is a human resource management junior. She began writing at *The Mercury* in 2021 and is currently the Life & Arts Editor. Her love of writing drove her to join the organization and she spends her free time reading and playing with her cat.

### ANDRÉ AVERION



André Averion is a psychology senior. He joined *The Mercury* in October 2021, starting off as a video game opinion columnist before becoming the Distribution & Outreach Manager, a photographer, a graphic artist, a journalist, and a trusted face of UTD Student Media. He's best known as the resident office goblin and dungeon master, the go-to event planner, and the tea-time tita who seemingly knows something about everyone in the office. If he isn't found captaining The Media Mobile or at the Student Union Mercury Booth, you can find him "reading" in a hammock, dragging coworkers to cheer the Comets at home games or supporting others as a crisis intervention counselor. André plans to become a psychiatrist while continuing journalism on the side and hopes to one day retire and open his own café bookstore.

### KATHERYN HO



Katheryn is a marketing senior with a to-be-determined minor. She started her *Mercury* journey as a photographer. She is now the Graphics Editor at The Mercury and sometimes a photographer (if no one can make it downtown for a gig). She joined *The Mercury* because she wanted to do a creative extracurricular and working for the press sounded cool. Katheryn looks forward to a creative job because that's her dream.

### UMAMA SURIYA



Umama Suriya is a literature senior also completing a high school teaching certification. She started working at *The Mercury* last May and became Social Media Manager in August. Umama says she started working for *The Mercury* because she wanted to start getting involved with spreading the interesting stories that are present all around campus.

PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAM GETS MAJOR UPGRADE

TEJAL DHAN  
Managing Editor

Starting in fall 2023, the School of Economic, Political and Policy Sciences will now offer a bachelor's degree in public health, which combines medical topics with the social, political and economic contexts that healthcare takes place in.

Richard Scotch, EPPS professor and program head of sociology, made the proposal after seeing Comets' interest in the public health minor, which has already been declared by 36 students. The degree is meant to prepare students for careers in public health administration, safety and research, but can also serve as a strong second degree for those interested in healthcare or medicine. Intended as a liberal arts program, the subject matter of the major focuses on global policymaking and a societal viewpoint of wellness, rather than science or clinical courses.

"[The program exists] to give people some ... understanding of the social context for health," Scotch said. "What are the social dimensions? Why

are some people more likely to be at risk for health problems than others? What are some of the barriers for people getting treatment? We'll be looking at mental health. We'll be looking at environmental health. Each of those involves some special topics."

Scotch said pre-med students took an interest in EPPS's medical sociology and health policy classes, leading to the establishment of the public health minor ten years ago. Scotch said that he believes the new program will attract more pre-med students, as it is a good complement to a science major, as well as to those interested in a master's degree in public health.

"Then, I think there are students who might not want the graduate degree, but who want to work in the healthcare sector," Scotch said. "As you know, it's about a sixth of the whole economy, so there's a lot of opportunities there."

The major goes beyond medical

SEE **HEALTH**, PAGE 10

**PUBLIC HEALTH**

**Environment and Disease Prevention**

**Global Health Policy**

**Medical Sociology**

**HOW IS PUBLIC HEALTH DIFFERENT FROM OTHER HEALTH MAJORS?**

**Careers**

**Public Health**

School of Economic, Political and Policy Sciences

Health and Safety Specialist, Health Services Manager, Global Health Analyst, and Medicine (Pre-Med)

**Example Courses**

Spatial Dimensions of Health and Disease (GE06 3357)  
Healthcare Issues: Global Perspectives (HLTH 3310)  
Mental Health and Illness (SOC 4371)

**HEALTHCARE STUDIES**

School of Interdisciplinary Studies

Medicine (Pre-Med), Pharmaceutical Services, Therapy, Physical and Occupational Healthcare Administration

Introductory Organic Chemistry (CHEM 2323)  
Human Anatomy and Physiology with Lab I (BIOL 3455)  
Medical Terminology (HLTH 3101)

**HEALTHCARE MANAGEMENT**

School of Management

Clinic/Hospital Management, Health Information Technology, Quality Assurance and Human Resources

Introductory Management Accounting (ACCT 2302)  
Healthcare Regulatory Environment (HMG 3310)  
Economics of Healthcare Environment (HGMT 3320)

OLUWASEUN ADEYEMI | MERCURY STAFF

What to know about the Dallas ransomware attack

MANYA BONDADA  
Mercury Staff

The Royal ransomware group compromised the healthcare information of 30,253 self-insured Dallas city employees during the May 3 ransomware attack, raising questions on why news of the theft was only recently made public.

On May 3, 2023, the city of Dallas experienced a ransomware attack from the Royal ransomware operation, a group that has actively been targeting educational institutions and healthcare infrastructure since Sept. 2022. The attack temporarily brought down city systems for the Dallas Police Department and Fire Rescue, including the 911 line. Although there were threats by Royal to share Dallas employees' personal information, as late as June 1, Dallas officials had not indicated that any information was compromised during the data breach. A report filed with

the U.S Department of Health and Human Services shows that on Aug. 3, the city reported a breach of information for 30,253 people with self-insured group health plans. Compromised information included the victims' phone numbers, credit card details, SSNs and medical information. The investigation is still ongoing, and Chief Information Officer Bill Zielinski is expected to update the Dallas City Council on Sept. 6.

According to Health and Human Services guidelines, a data breach affecting more than 500 people must be reported to the media no more than 60 days after the discovery of a breach. An IBM Cost of a Data Breach report from 2023 said that the mean time to identify and contain a ransomware breach with law enforcement involvement was 63 days. Fox4News said that at least one victim was informed of his personal data being stolen on June 14, but the city did not inform



SHUBHAM JHA | MERCURY STAFF

**Attackers could use stolen medical information to craft future phishing scams.**

the public that benefits-related information may have been accessed until July 24, 50 days later.

To understand the city's response and get more information about the attack and its lingering consequences, *The Mercury* spoke with professor of computer science Murat Kantarcioglu, who is head of UTD's Data Security and Privacy Lab.

"[Dallas] might want to figure out which data is compromised," Kantarcioglu said. "You don't want to alert anybody if their

SEE **RANSOMWARE**, PAGE 11



MORPHOSIS ARCHITECTS | COURTESY

The surface of the Athenaeum will be sandblasted, creating a series of smooth edges and etched faces that reflect light during the day.

Designer details on Athenaeum architecture

VAISHNAVI JOSYULA  
Mercury Staff

The first phase of the Athenaeum, also known as the Crow Museum of Asian Art at UTD, is currently undergoing construction and will be open to the public on Aug. 19, 2024.

According to Senior Director Amy Hofland, the 68,000-square foot museum located to the south of JSOM began design and construction in 2019 when the Crow family — a pioneer in Asian arts — donated \$25 million for the construction of a new building on campus. The museum consists of art pieces including but not limited to sculptures, bronze ware, and scrolls from East, Southeast and South Asia dating from 5000 BC to the present day. Hofland added that the museum will be open to the public for free, in accordance with the founders' wishes.

"We most recently had a beam signing and we're in a process now of completing the addition of the panels with the hope of having the entire space conditioned later this fall," said Calvin Jamison, vice president for facilities and economic development. "The first phase ... will be completed [in] the spring of '24, and actual occupancy will take place during the summer."

The museum, which was designed by Morphosis Architects and led by principal architect Arne Emerson — also the project architect for the Perot Museum of Nature and Science in downtown Dallas — is accompanied by a 1,100-space parking lot and is currently undergoing construction.

"We have 10-foot by 30-foot precast concrete structures that are being hung on the steel armature that create the wall of the museums," Hoffland said. "Morphosis designed a tessellation pattern that's based

SEE **ATHENAEUM**, PAGE 11



MORPHOSIS ARCHITECTS | COURTESY

The main lobby is a two-story space with a glass skylight and precast concrete, both with insulator properties. It also houses a front desk and ticketing area.

Meet your current SG Senators

What your representatives for the 2023-24 school year want you to know, in their own words.

Isabella Spartz

My name is Isabella Spartz, and I am a third-year senator majoring in finance and economics. I have a passion for politics, civic engagement and encouraging people to vote. Currently, I hold the position of legislative affairs chair, and throughout my time in SG, I have filled nearly every role, starting from at-large senator and school senator to chair and former Judicial Board member. I joined SG with the intention of enhancing our civic engagement efforts within UTD and demonstrating to students that there are various ways to engage with the community beyond just voting — although voting is extremely important. During my tenure in SG, I have led multiple initiatives both inside and outside of legislative affairs.

I have organized projects such as our annual National Voter Registration Day voter's drive — taking place on September 19 this year — as well as Party to the Polls events, professor policy panels and the Richardson and Plano City Council panels. I also founded and chaired the special committee on the 88th legislature. In the coming term, my goal is to foster greater connections between local officials and students. I am currently working on bringing Colin Allred to campus for a fireside chat with students. Additionally, I hope to invite House Representatives Angie Chen Button and Mihaela Plesa to speak with students about the legislature and provide a recap of the last session. I also love connecting with student organizations; SG and Comets for Better Transit produced great events together last term. I hope to continue working with Comets to create a better environment for the entire UTD community.



ISABELLA SPARTZ

Nandita Kumar

Hello UTD! My name is Nandita Kumar, and I am an at-large senator and chair of the Diversity, Equity and Belonging Committee. I am so excited to lead the DEB committee in making our living and learning environment more equitable and inclusive. One of my goals for the year is to create a Title IX guide that would inform sexual assault survivors on the reporting process as well as the legal, medical and social support resources available to them through UTD. Through partnerships with ODEI, the Galerstein Gender Center and multicultural student organizations, we hope to foster more collaboration between leadership and students. UTD ranks highly in LGBTQ+ acceptance, and amid legislative attacks on queer students, I hope to continuously improve the inclusive environment that Comets have created with each other, for each other.



NANDITA KUMAR

Alisa Model

Hi, my name is Alisa, and I am a sophomore political science major. I am a returning senator and this year's chair of the Green Initiative Committee. In this role, I am excited to work with students and administration to create a more sustainable campus! One initiative I am pursuing this year is the creation of a graduation gown rental program for students, with the goal of increasing equity so everyone has the chance to walk their graduation while reducing



ALISA MODEL

the waste that single-use gowns produce. I also hope to increase outreach to Comets regarding Green Initiative's Green Fund, which can support student ideas that increase any aspect of sustainability on campus. If you have project ideas, you may be eligible to receive funding and implementation help from us. We want to hear from you! Please contact me at alisa.model@utdallas.edu or fill out the form on the Green Initiative page under SG's "Services."

Natasha Kokkodil

As a political science major and advocacy leader, I am aligned with the goal of preserving Diversity, Equity and Inclusion on campus. Erasing the things that make our university alive and memorable is extremely problematic, and all gender identities, cultural backgrounds and lived experiences must be lauded.



NATASHA KOKKODIL

The student body can rest assured that I am available to address any incoming concerns that are impacting their campus experience. I hope to plan events, informative sessions, interactive activities, and panels that are engaging, informative, and meaningful! Many students are uninformed on the legislative space and how our rights are being violated.

Giana Abraham

Hello! My name is Giana Abraham, and I am a sophomore neuroscience major serving as your Communications Committee chair this year! I joined SG as a freshman to get involved with the community and make a difference. This year, beyond managing SG's social media accounts and website, I hope to bring back a few popular events. In terms of our committee, last year's EROL (Comet LORE) writing competition highlighted UTD's abundant student talent, and we cannot wait to host that again this year. Everyone al-

ways asks what SG does, and we hope to answer that question by making a comprehensive magazine on all the work this organization has done on campus.

There are always amazing events coming up, and I love seeing you all there. We also enjoy partnerships, so if you have an organization with brilliant ideas, feel free to email or attend a Tuesday senate meeting and share your thoughts there. We are here to represent you and your concerns, so remember that you can always reach out!



GIANA ABRAHAM

Debopreeta Bhattacharya

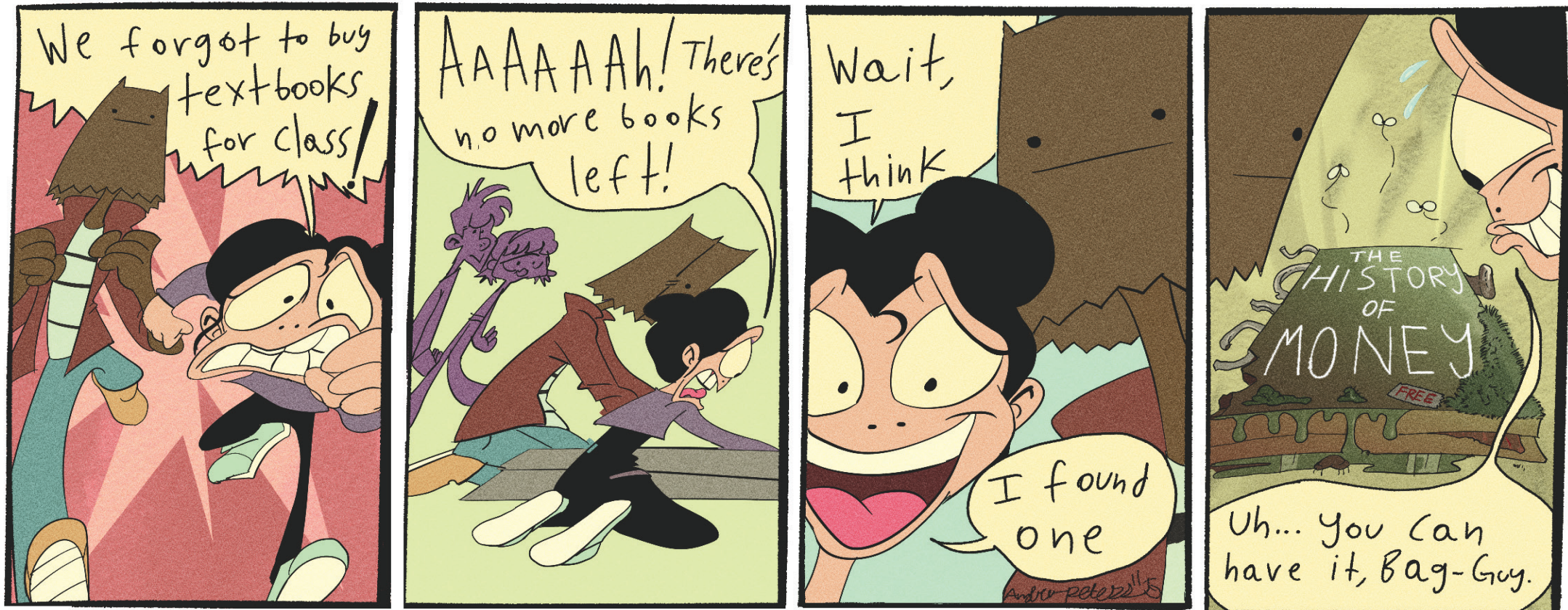
Hi! My name is Debopreeta Bhattacharya, and I am a junior sociology major serving as your Student Affairs Committee Chair. This is my third year in SG and second year as chair, and I am excited about our plans for the term! I initially joined SG as a freshman because I am passionate about giving students a voice and making sure campus life is the best it can be for everyone.



DEBOPREETA BHATTACHARYA

As chair last year, I led the second and third iterations of the Finals Scream — now a tradition each semester — and continued the Blank Space project. This upcoming term, I hope to collaborate with other committees on new projects while continuing Student Affairs Committee traditions from the past. I am always looking to foster more student engagement with SG. Super excited for another year with SG, and I cannot wait to see what it brings!

BAG-GUY AND LIYA



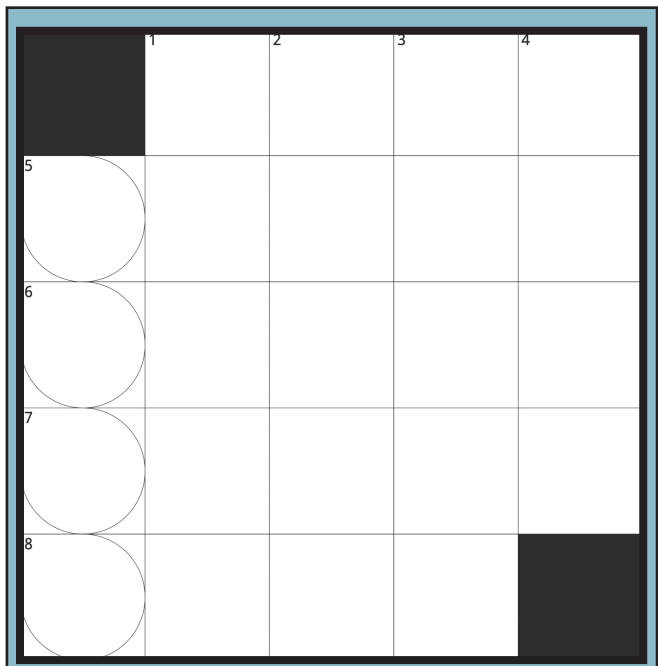
ANDREW PETERS | MERCURY STAFF

EXPECTATIONS V. REALITY



RACHEL WOON | MERCURY STAFF

Fast Fashion crosswords



**ACROSS**

1 Start of many addresses

5 “\_\_ the World”

6 Less common

7 Mr. T’s group

8 “Over here!”

**DOWN**

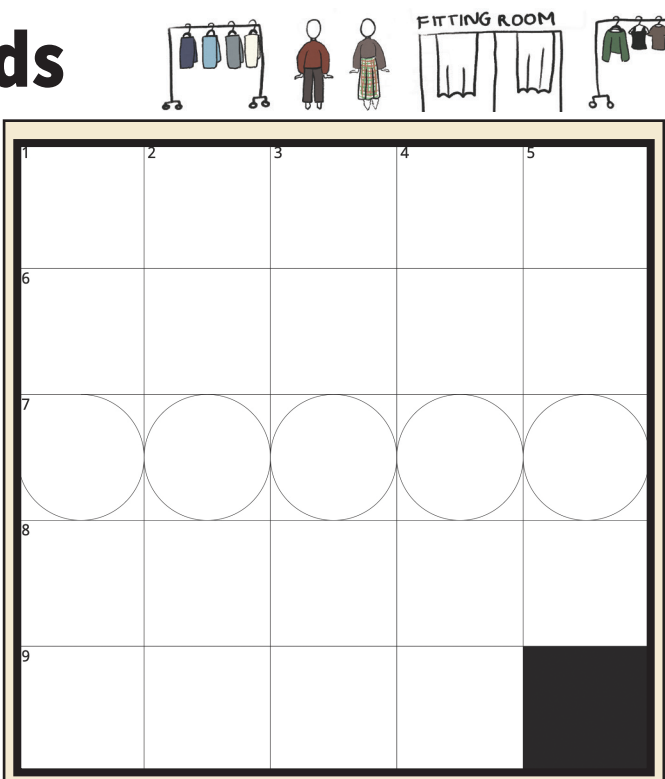
1 Warms

2 Zeroes out, as a scale

3 Grab the tab

4 Hairdo that got that woman convicted in “Legally Blonde”

5 Finish filming



**ACROSS**

1 Signs of healing

6 Namesake of a Dallas science museum

7 Draw \_\_ in the sand

8 Undercover?

9 Chem. units

**DOWN**

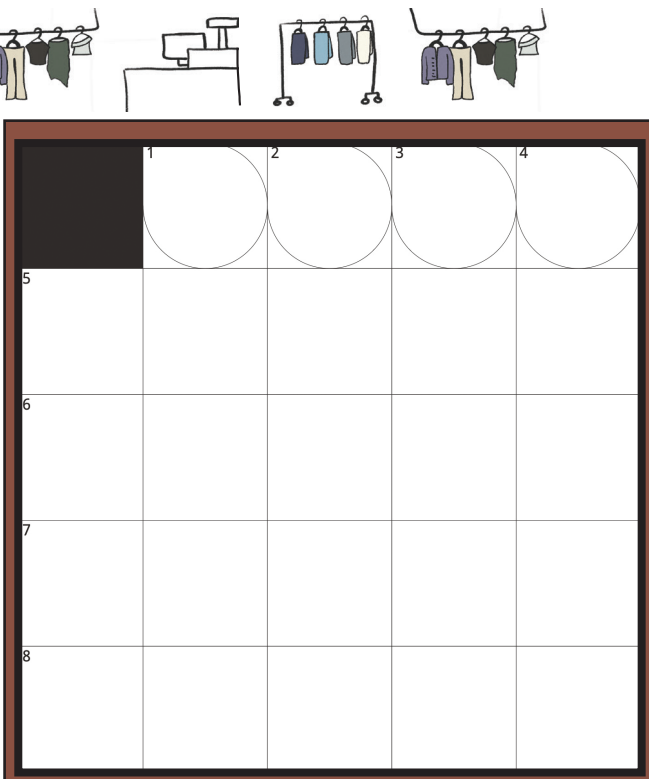
1 Muscle twitch

2 Yo-Yo Ma’s instrument

3 The Little Mermaid

4 Joint tenants?

5 Put one’s foot down



**ACROSS**

1 Name for a 5x5 crossword, familiarly, or with 8-across, a descriptor for each circled answer

5 First name that is first alphabetically?

6 School group

7 Choice word?

8 See 1-across

**DOWN**

1 Rami of “Mr. Robot”

2 Farsi speaker

3 Private message?

4 Picture within a picture

5 Powerful pair in poker

9.05 Sudoku

	3							6
6		4	5	3		1		
	7	9	1	8				
		6						5
					2		3	7
			3	9	5			
								4
8	9						1	
5								

Give Me Some Space! key

R	A	T	A	S	I	A	M	P	A	R	C	A	N	E
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P	E	R	M	A		E	S	T	A		T	A	S	
C	O	M	E	T	O		H	O	N	E	Y	M	O	O
A	N	A	L	O	G		E	T	A	L		E	M	M
T	E	S	T	E	S		S	O	L	I		N	E	W

8.21 Sudoku key

1	3	2	4	9	7	8	6	5
9	6	7	8	3	5	4	2	1
4	8	5	6	2	1	9	7	3
2	7	1	5	6	9	3	4	8
5	9	8	7	4	3	2	1	6
6	4	3	2	1	8	7	5	9
7	5	9	1	8	2	6	3	4
3	1	4	9	7	6	5	8	2
8	2	6	3	5	4	1	9	7

# Chess team gains three grandmasters


New faces include finance freshman Koustav Chatterjee, CS freshman Balaji Daggupati and business administration freshman Anastasia Paramzina

**AAFIYA ASLAM**  
Mercury Staff

**Koustav Chatterjee** holds a FIDE rating of 2546 and is the No. 400 grandmaster worldwide. He was born in India and holds the 78th grandmaster title in the country.

Chatterjee started playing chess when he was six or seven years old after his father taught him the fundamental rules. His father also brought him to tournaments to play against stronger opponents, one of them being the 2010 State Championship in India. Without any serious training before the tournament, Chatterjee won, which increased his interest in the game.

“[My family] thought that I was kind of a prodigy,” Chatterjee said. “I just played chess just for the sake of playing, but as I’ve grown older, I started to appreciate chess ... It’s really fun to just be fully immersed in



**Chatterjee vs. Praggnanandhaa, Asian Continental (2022)**

32. Ke2, h5

White to move. This is a losing position for White — how can he gain an advantage?

On move 33, White played pawn to f3, a missed win. Black Bd4 will prevent White's possible mating nets.

Answer: g4

**KOUSTAV CHATTERJEE**

something for long hours.”


Chatterjee said that his most memorable successful game was his match against Sethuraman Panayappan “S.P.”. Sethuraman — ranked No. 217 worldwide — in the 2022 National Chess Championship. However, Chatterjee’s most memorable game in terms of losses was his match against Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa — ranked No. 22 worldwide — in the 2022 Asian Continental Open Chess tournament.

“I beat [S.P.] twice, and he beat me once. After the game, even if he loses, he will analyze with me and it’s a very fun time,” Chatterjee said. “But if I think about the most memorable, it’s probably playing against Praggnanandhaa.”

So far in his first year at UTD, Chatterjee has enjoyed the school culture and making friends with people from different cultural backgrounds. Chatterjee said he loves the other chess team members and looks forward to meeting more people.

“I would say that UTD has been an amazing university,” Chatterjee said. “This has far surpassed my expectations, because it has been really nice.”

**Balaji Daggupati** has a FIDE rating of 2501 and is the No. 653 grandmaster worldwide. He was raised in California and became a grandmaster at age 16. Daggupati was inspired to begin playing chess at five years old after seeing his sister play in the school. His parents were supportive of his interest from the very beginning and have been key components of his career. As a result, he was able to raise his rankings in chess and played some of the best games he had throughout his chess career. “Instead of focusing on GM from the very beginning, I felt it was so much easier to break it down and it always becomes a journey so you don’t have to worry about ‘oh, I need to get this title right now,’” Daggupati said. Daggupati cited two memorable



**Chazarian vs. Daggupati, U.S Junior Chess Championship (2023)**

8. Bxc3, g6 9. c4

Black to move — how can he gain an advantage?

Black pushes a center attack with the king's pawn. White's position is very open on the queenside, which may lead to a check from Black, putting his king in an uncomfortable position.

Answer: ... e5



**BALAJI DAGGAPUTI**


games, both from the US Junior Championship, from 2022 and 2023. Daggupati found success at the beginning of the championship, but then his next three games went downhill, and in order to receive the last requirement to become a GM, he needed two more wins. “I think those two games even though the quality was not the best, it’s still some of the most memorable moments in my career, because it’s such a hard spot to be in, and I was able to pull it off in the end,” Daggupati said. Daggupati said that UTD professors strike a good balance between making sure you do your work and keeping it light-hearted. Additionally, Daggupati mentioned that he loves the social events UTD provides for student bonding. Daggupati comes to UTD with an open mind in which his objective is to try his best in his future tournaments along with his studies. “I’m just happy to be here and hoping I can get chess to a higher level,” Daggupati said. “But I’m mainly here to have fun, explore my interests. Try to just be the best I can.”

**Anastasia Paramzina** has a FIDE rating of 2183 and is the second woman grandmaster to be admitted into UTD. She was raised in Moscow, Russia and has played in multiple youth chess tournaments.

Paramzina tried a variety of hobbies when she was a child, including figure skating, music and chess. She loved figure skating but learned that she liked watching it more than doing it. Though she did well in her music classes, Paramzina ultimately figured out what she wanted to do after winning the Moscow chess championship under the age of eight in 2009.

“It was more exciting than just to go to classes for music school, so the choice was pretty obvious for me,” Paramzina said. “It’s difficult to imagine my life without competing [in chess].”

Paramzina said that two of



**Paramzina vs. Abdumalik, World Girls Junior Championship (2017)**

17. Qd3, Qd7

What is best way for White to gain a lasting advantage?

White's queen enters Black's territory, which will lead to potential mating nets, as most of her pieces are up-prodding the Black king.

Answer: Qg6



**ANASTASIA PARAMZINA**

her most memorable games were in the Girls World Junior Championship of 2017. The first game was Paramzina’s win against international master Zhansaya Abdumalik in round 8 of the tournament; the second was Paramzina’s win against IM Iulija Osmak in the last round of the tournament, which placed her at second overall.

“[The last game] was the longest game of the tournament, so everyone was watching us,” Paramzina said. “It was a really tough game, but I was able to manage.”

Paramzina said that she looks forward to attending events and joining clubs and organizations to make the best of her years at UTD. Additionally, she looks forward to getting closer to the members of the Chess Team.

“I want to experience more things in the first semester to find out what I really like and maybe what I like less,” Paramzina said. “As a chess player, I’m very ambitious, but let’s see how easy or not easy [this semester] will be for me.”

## BIWEEKLY UTD SPORTS SCHEDULE



**WOMENS GOLF**

9/11 - 9/12 AT LADY BULLDOG CLASSIC  
9/16 - 9/17 AT ASC PREVIEW  
10/1 - 10/2 AT DIII NATIONAL PREVIEW



**MENS TENNIS**

9/8 - 9/10 VS COLLIN COLLEGE  
9/16 AT COLLIN  
9/21 - 9/24 AT ITA SW REGIONAL



**MENS GOLF**

9/25 - 9/26 AT UMHB FALL INVITATIONAL  
10/9 - 10/10 AT ALAMO CITY CLASSIC  
10/15 - 10/17 AT GOLF WEEK DIVISION III



**WOMENS TENNIS**

9/8 - 9/10 VS COLLIN COLLEGE  
9/16 AT COLLIN  
9/21 - 9/24 AT ITA SW REGIONAL



**CROSS COUNTRY**

9/2 AT ORVILLE ROGERS XC OPENER  
9/16 AT SOUTHWESTERN SHOWDOWN  
9/30 CHILE PEPPER FESTIVAL

ADITI MUNGALE | MERCURY STAFF



**Volleyball**

**LOST**

L 0 - 3 (20-25, 16-25, 19-25)





**Volleyball**

**LOST**

L 2 - 3  
(12-25, 25-22, 23-25, 25-22, 13-15)





**Men's Soccer**

**DRAW**

T 0 - 0





**Women's Soccer**

**WIN**

W 4 - 0





OLUWASEUN ADEYEMI | MERCURY STAFF

**SPORTS CENTER**



# NATIVE Coffee Co. serves 'ridiculously' good coffee



RAYA JISHI  
Mercury Staff

A new school year means new classes, new schedules and — most importantly — new study spots. If you're looking for an aesthetically pleasing coffee shop or just a change of scenery when getting your caffeine fix, look no further than NATIVE Coffee Co.

"We believe in the ridiculous." That's what NATIVE's website says, and amazingly, the saying proves true. The cafe has some of the most unique coffee concoctions in the DFW area, and their seasonal creations bring a constant refresher to the menu. Located off Alpha Road in North Dallas, NATIVE is just under 15 minutes away from campus by car. Known for its work-friendly vibe, NATIVE is perfect for a last minute study session or a meet-up with a friend.

Prices of the classic drinks range from \$4 to \$5.25, and the cafe is open every day except for Sundays from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Their specialty and seasonal drinks can be up to \$7, but you can taste the quality. Although none of their foods are vegan friendly, they do offer two dairy free options for drinks. If you have a group project or gathering, you can also re-

serve a conference room for free for up to two hours. Longer reservations are available at an additional charge.

The artisanal coffee roastery is brimming with plants that soak in the space's natural light, giving it a modern boho aesthetic. The baristas are exceptionally friendly, and with roasters from Slovenia to Ireland to Japan, the menu draws influence from all around the world. Their seasonal drinks and innovative coffee creations draw on unfamiliar flavors, creating robust and distinctive drinks roasted with a Scandinavian technique.

NATIVE's classic plain latte has a sweet undertone with a distinct flavor profile, but my personal favorite is the fruity pebbles matcha latte, which is just as tasty as it is colorful. If you prefer chocolate, try the cocoa puff latte, a mocha-style drink with warm notes and a not overpowering coffee taste. Their seasonal Juneberry latte is a sweet caffeine boost perfect for summer. For the chai lovers, NATIVE's iced chai latte is popular for its smooth flavor and strong coffee-to-milk ratio. But no matter what drink you choose, it is sure to be a perfect study buddy.

When it comes to food, the guava cheese-



NAHAM PILLI | MERCURY STAFF

Though NATIVE is certainly a gem, it is not always a hidden one. On weekends and mornings, it can grow busy and sometimes loud despite the ample seating. But don't worry — noise-cancelling headphones do the trick, and you always have the option to get a latte to go.

Overall, NATIVE strikes the perfect balance between form and function, with beautiful drinks that taste as good as they look and an ambience both trendy and prime for focusing. If you need a new spot to get your fix, be sure to add this to your list.



GRACE COWGER | MERCURY STAFF

# 'Barbie' is brilliant blend of social critique, feminism and empowerment for all

RAYA JISHI  
Mercury Staff

In a delightful departure from the conventional Barbie narrative, director Greta Gerwig's "Barbie" movie transcends the boundaries of traditional film and social critiques. With her signature charm, Gerwig brings new depth to the iconic doll, delivering a film that resonates with audiences of all ages.

The release of "Barbie" generated endless acclaim. From fascinating cinematography to big-name stars, it was set to be a blockbuster. The movie contains critiques of gender roles, societal expectations and the general conflict of womanhood that resonated with many. Despite all the supporters, however, there were also those who found the movie too "woke," cheesy and overly exaggerated. What makes this film so multifaceted is the juxtaposition of comedic timing and serious plot. Contrary to what many claim, the movie does not call for the superiority of either women or men but advocates for the empowerment of both genders.

Viewers might expect "Barbie" to support the cult image of the doll, but the

film reveals sad and realistic truths instead. In fact, a driving force of the narrative is how many women frown upon the idea of Barbie; many characters believe she is not a feminist icon. After all, their leading doll is a blonde, conventionally attractive white woman with "absolutely no cellulite." The movie displays Mattel's attempt at remedying this by incorporating Barbies of different ethnicities and body types beyond the stereotype. However, they all share a sense of "perfection" that, instead of uplifting underrepresented women, reinforces unrealistic standards on them as well. This is an internally misogynistic ideal that the "Barbie" movie tackles: the Barbie brand may pride itself on being "diverse," but that diversity means nothing when it isn't actually representative of its target audience.

The movie begins with classic Barbie in Barbie Land, a realm where the Barbies are in charge and the simple-minded Kens are only there to cheer them on. Here, women have powerful professions, from president to leading athlete, while Ken's

SEE **BARBIE**, PAGE 11

# UTD WELCOMES COMETS WITH DISCO

UTD welcomed new Comets through their Weeks of Welcome events, a vibrant and exhilarating experience that left a lasting impression on all who attended, with standout moments such as the Silent Disco, Standup Comedy Extravaganza, and Meet the Press. The Standup Comedy Extravaganza saw Noel Miller take the stage in the ATEC auditorium for over a crowd of 1,000 Comets. Miller provided campus with a night of fun and laughter with his "EVERYTHING IS F#&KED" set. The Meet the Press event fostered a sense of belonging and camaraderie as students interacted with each other and exchanged insights about campus life while getting poetry written for them and photos taken by *The Mercury*.



HRIDYA DHULIPALA | MERCURY STAFF



KATHERYN HO | GRAPHICS EDITOR



KAZI SHAFIN | PHOTO EDITOR



KAZI SHAFIN | PHOTO EDITOR

The Silent Disco took UTD by storm, with DJs transmitting music directly into wireless headphones, creating an immersive and unique environment filled with dancing and energy for over 100 Comets.



KAZI SHAFIN | PHOTO EDITOR



KAZI SHAFIN | PHOTO EDITOR



KATHERYN HO | GRAPHICS EDITOR



KATHERYN HO | GRAPHICS EDITOR



HRIDYA DHULIPALA | MERCURY STAFF



# JAPAN: Form and Function

PHOTOS BY KATHERYN HO | GRAPHICS EDITOR

**TEJAL DHAN**  
Managing Editor

One of the largest collections of Japanese folk art in the Western world is currently on display until April 14, 2024 in the Crow Museum of Asian Art.

“Japan Form and Function: The Montgomery Collection” is a vast exhibition of paintings, textiles, ceramics, sculptures and more that span over 5,000 years of Japanese history and several regions of the country, from southern Okinawa to northern Honshu. The selection of art comes from collector Jeffrey Montgomery’s passion for Japanese folk art and highlights both the function and aesthetic.

While many of the objects in the exposition have similar aesthetic designs, shapes and colors, some have more practical everyday functions compared to others, which tell folk stories or record history. For example, a four-sided sake bottle from the Edo period exemplifies

the floral details and softer colors that can be found in many Japanese works. Similarly, textiles across the collection are hand painted with muted reds and flowing calligraphy.

Eye-catching pieces such as a 32-foot long banner depicting a battle between soldiers utilize vibrant colors and bold brushstrokes to tell a story. Smaller works are no different in their function, though their form may be more unique. A wooden sculpture, though devoid of color and words, tells the folk story of a Buddhist monk, Daruma, who cut off his eyelids to avoid falling asleep during meditation — leading to the creation of the very first green tea leaves.

The exhibition is free of cost and located in the Arts District of downtown Dallas, a 25-minute drive from campus and a short ride on the DART red line. For lovers of art collections and Japanese culture, it is a must-see.



# STUDENT MEDIA: A BRIEF HISTORY

How did *The Mercury* get its start as a newspaper? How was Student Media formed? *The Mercury* takes a deep dive into its origins.

**ANDRÉ AVERION**  
Mercury Staff

UTD Student Media, often shortened to StuMe, is a Student Affairs division composed of four paid student-managed organizations that give Comets valuable experience in the fields of print, video and radio journalism. But how did StuMe come to be?

The earliest mentions of Student Media date back to the spring of 1980, when the Student Government sponsored an event titled the “Name Your Student Newspaper” competition. Students eagerly submitted titles for the future publication, including UT Delight, UTD Esprit, Campus Courier, UT Dyslexia, UTD Laser and UTD Mercury. While UTD Esprit and Campus Courier were the top running names, the selection committee was attracted to “The Mercury” due to its affiliation with the Greek god Hermes, the winged messenger of the pantheon.

On Sept. 2, 1980, students found new wooden kiosks and market shelves stacked with the first edition of *The Mercury Newspaper*.

*The Mercury Newspaper* would be the voice of UTD officials and students for decades, covering the latest news, entertainment, research, sports and opinions most relevant to students. It regularly won awards in collegiate press competitions and was nationally recognized in 2021 as the best collegiate newspaper in the US at the College Media Association awards.

In 2002, a new media organization



Above is the first Editor-In-Chief of *The Mercury*, Sally Nance, holding the first copy of *The Mercury* in 1980 (pictured right.)

emerged as students tuned into a radio station playing the latest music out of a closet in ECS, which quickly gained the name RadioUTD. The founders of the informal club also created an online blog to update listeners on new albums, local concerts and more. In 2004, Student Affairs expanded the role of Student Media by inviting RadioUTD to officially air out of the Student Union.

However, by 2003, several McDermott scholars departed *The Mercury*, upset by the way organizations and campus events were covered. They felt that the newspaper was overly dismissive of school organizations and too protective of university admin.

Funded by Edward J. Harpham, professor emeritus of political science and former dean of the Hobson Wildenthal Honors College, these students began printing satire editorial magazines which they presented to the public as A Modest Proposal, known today as AMP. The organization was underground until 2008, when it was brought into Student Media and given its own room in a computer lab on the third floor of the McDermott Library.

Later in 2009, Student Affairs invited another student organization into the StuMe roster, making the 2008 film club UTD-TV an official organization; they were given a room across the hall from AMP on the



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third floor of the library. UTD-TV initially focused on reporting news, but within its first few years it began to focus more heavily on short films, comedies, skits and game shows. It returned to reporting the news in mid-2010 but continued to win awards as one of the most entertaining collegiate television stations.

After Chad Thomas, the senior sssociate vice president to Student Affairs since 2022, was appointed Student Media director in 2010, all four organizations were brought together into one office space, located on the first floor of the Student Union in 1.601. *The Mercury* and AMP previously had a bitter

rivalry and often maintained a closed-door policy with each other; this was not resolved until 2015 according to Thomas, and even then, there were still political clashes up until 2020.

“I think that is one of the things that I am most happy about and proud of about my time in Student Media,” Thomas said. “We were able to create a more unified culture and one where I think collaboration and dialogue and mutual support and respect became the norm, even if there wasn’t just uniformity and agreement at every stage of the way.”

The first official collaborative content project hosted by all four groups will begin on Sept. 17 with the reboot of *The Mercury Morning News*.

Today, StuMe helps Comets develop the skills needed for success in media while also providing opportunities for in-the-field experience and student interaction.

“I think it’s one of the best ways of any student organization or on-campus learning opportunity outside of the classroom that you can do,” Thomas said. “It is so rare to be able to go and say ‘I have no knowledge or skills pertaining to writing, design, content creation, video editing and production, audio work’ and then ... come away in a semester being knowledgeable and resourceful in a variety of skill areas and with specialized software and equipment. Suddenly those are marketable, hireable skills that may be paired with what you’re doing in the classroom in ways that you might not have ever thought.”



Starting September 17th

# LISTEN LIVE

Every Sunday from 10am-11am on RadioUTD!

Or watch recorded episodes on UTD-TV or The Mercury website.

# TRUMP'S MUGSHOT PROVES THAT POLITICS IS ONE BIG MEME



**MARIA SHAIKH**  
Copy Editor

If you are reading this article, every contour of that image is likely branded into your brain: the thin-lipped scowl, the blonde frizz, the hard blue eyes highlighted by a suit far too formal for a county jail. You have seen the memes and the online wars about whether the indictment was deserved or not, and the self-aggrandizing editorials whining about how the photo is a metaphor for the 2024 general election. Donald Trump's mugshot photo — released after his arrest in Georgia over 91 felony counts including election fraud and racketeering — is already immortalized as one of history's iconic photographs. But our reactions to this photo do far more than illustrate the drama of the upcoming presidential race. They reveal a striking attitude, unmistakably post-pandemic and roaring 2020s: the crumbling of America's belief in the political establishment.

Political reactions to the mugshot follow the pre-existing culture war surrounding Trump. His supporters insist he's facing fabricated charges while his opponents celebrate it as justice rightfully served. But if you look at the reaction of average

people instead of politicians, particularly the younger generations, the concern is not the legitimacy of Trump's arrest. No one cares about that topic anymore; rather, we spend our time making fun of it.

The legal and political reality of Trump's indictment is so dismissible to the average person that the only way to engage with the topic is by laughing at it. For the first time in history, a previous American president is facing criminal charges, and our reaction is to Photoshop him as a "2000s party girl." Our hysterics aren't over his crimes, but his self-identifying as "strawberry blond" on the county jail website.

This is the political culture that decades of social media and tabloid news have manufactured. In an economy where attention can reliably generate money, it is no longer profitable to be sensible or civil. What hooks people is outlandish cruelty and an endless cycle of drama that stains your reputation but keeps your relevance sparkling. News media has grown more sensationalized to compete with modern, attention-grabbing tech-

nologies: every complex topic is now beaten into digestible meme mush and every old-school, up-right politician is irrelevant. And



**DONALD J. TRUMP**

in this new world, being irrelevant and being dead are more alike than different. We all forgot Joe Biden existed as a legitimate human being and not some White House ghost story until the "soda" meme

**GRACE COWGER** | MERCURY STAFF

went viral. Infinitely quotable Trump, though, has never had this issue.

While social media and its attention economy play a significant role in how we received the Trump mugshot, there's more to the story. For decades now, Americans have been losing faith in establishment politics' ability to solve problems. Inflation climbs, wages stagnate and recessions cripple the country. New wars are waged as we find out old wars were false flag operations. Political extremism has doubled since 2004 as more people abandon liberal democratic procedures and seek real, radical change. None of our jesters — sorry, politicians — will get anything done, because they are too busy entertaining. And the sustained, systemic change that would actually help us hardly makes for a good story.

When every little thing clamors to sell itself as huge, nothing ends up mattering. Why should I care about the minutiae of Trump's 91 felony charges? Why should I follow local elections? I have work

to do, and I can only spare mental energy for what holds my attention ...

like a great Photoshop of Trump's mugshot into the "Barbie and Ken LAPD" meme. We don't rally for change even though our trust in government has reached all-time lows. We don't fact-check, critique our sources or demand better journalism — we're just so busy. We eat the slop handed to us and maybe throw money at charity whenever something bad happens. We talk about today's hottest topic, be it the Kardashians or the Trumps, and then we forget and move on.

Can we keep living like this?

As long as our politics and our entertainment mix together, we will never escape this trap of ineffectual politicians turning the country into a circus. That is what sells, after all. Reagan the actor sloganized his way to the White House, where he pushed policies many of us hate today. Bush Jr. the nepo baby did much the same. And Trump still engages his followers even from a prison cell. Right now, the more a person is thought and talked about, the more money and votes they accrue, even if most of the attention is negative. We need to break that cycle.

SEE **TRUMP**, PAGE 12

## How the resume grind-set kills our campus

**MARIA SHAIKH**  
Copy Editor

The first few weeks of the semester always bring a flood of "we're hiring" and "officers wanted" flyers across campus. If you're currently struggling to balance your responsibilities or running low on time, but are looking to add a shiny title or two to your resume, here's my advice: don't apply. We need less grinders in campus leadership if we want this university to thrive.

Many archetypes populate a college campus — the slackers, the partiers, the teacher's pets — but none are as iconic as the grinder. We all know this person: they take ten thousand credit hours, run every club, volunteer every weekend, go to work and internships and job shadow,

study for the MCAT... and somehow make it look easy. While the rest of us plebeians struggle to balance a handful of commitments, the grinder is doing literally everything. If they said they had invented time travel to get it all done, we would be unsurprised. The grinder is relentlessly productive, well-rounded and experienced; the aspiration of every imperfect student.

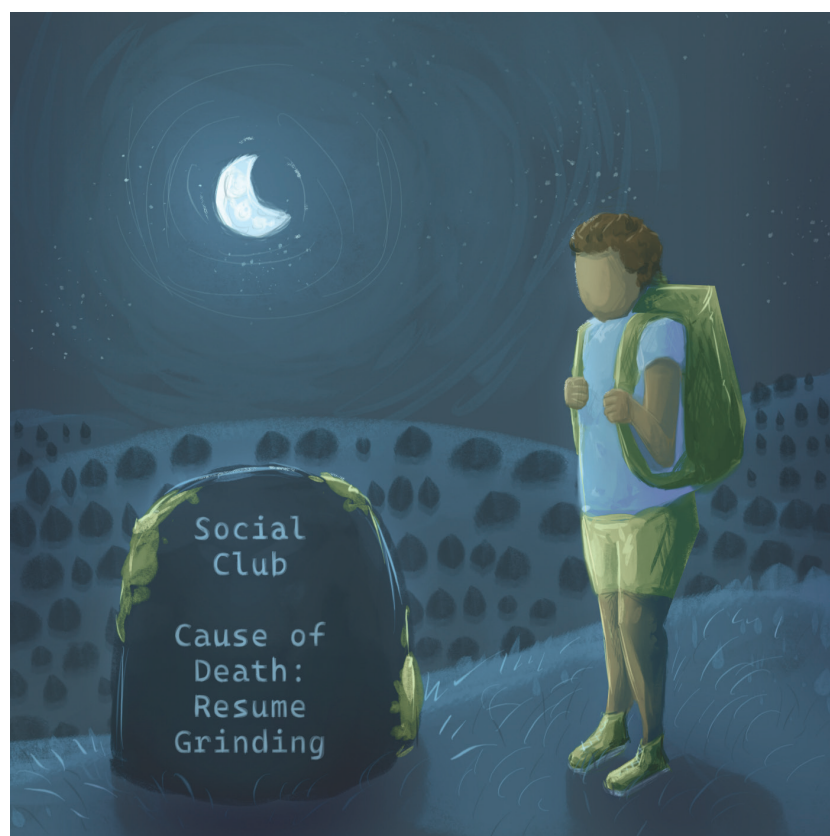
But the grinder hides one fatal flaw. They frequently overcommit and underperform, leading to the mismanagement of all kinds of organizations — which damages campus culture for all of us.

The truth of the matter is that the grinder doesn't care about everything they do. No one has enough soul-scorch-

ing passion for 15 different things. Some things naturally fall to the wayside in the great shuffle of priorities. But when the overambitious student, having signed up for several leadership roles that demand huge time commitments, gets busy with what they actually care about — studies, work or internships — then what happens to the less important things? The student organizations they're on the officer boards of, the nonprofit they founded, the startup they lead? All the great tasks they took on not out of love, but from a pathological need to fatten up their resume like a cow for slaughter?

Startups stagnate. Clubs fade into obscurity, leaving members feeling lost and

SEE **RESUME**, PAGE 12



**RAINIER PEDERSON** | MERCURY STAFF

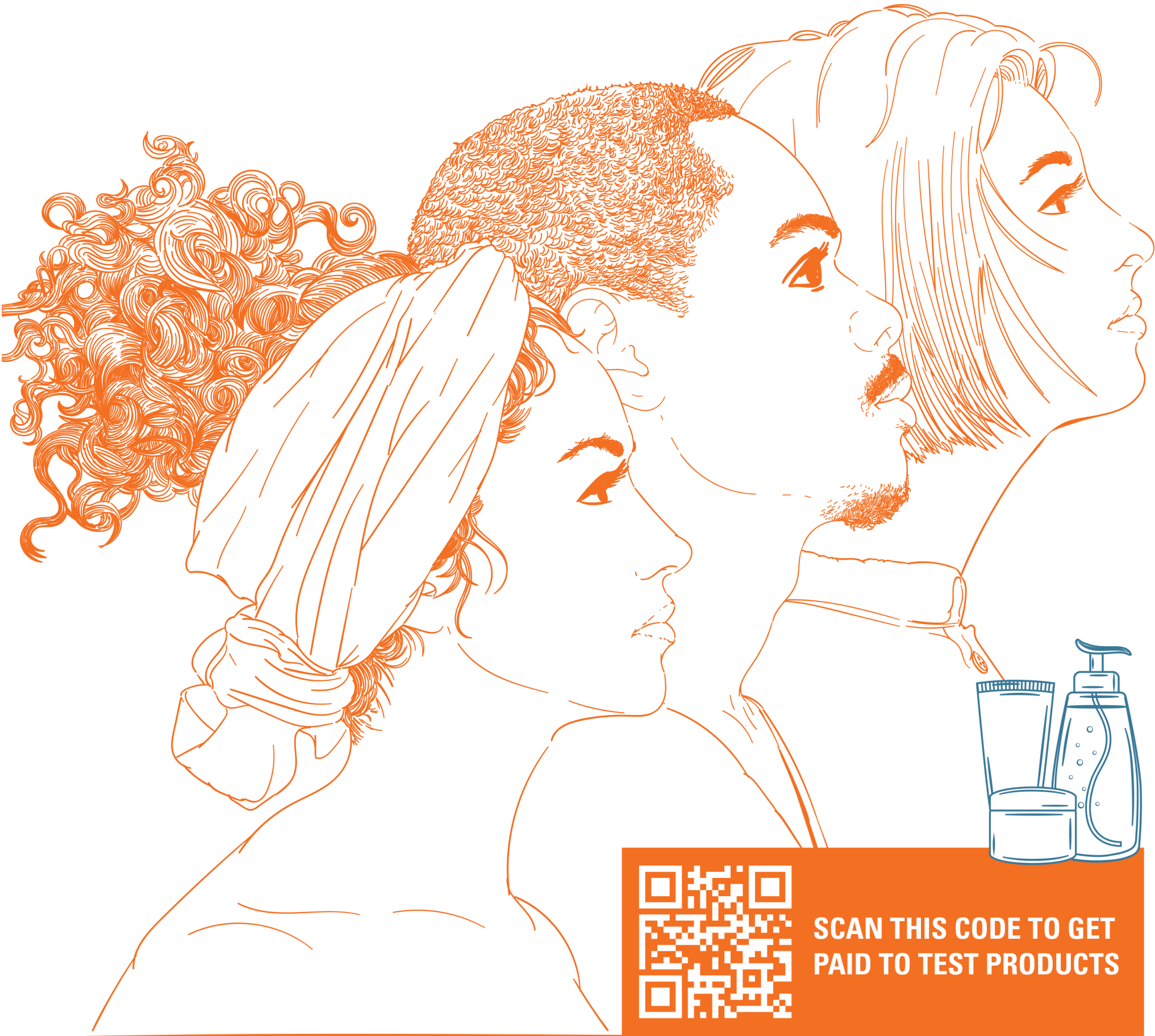


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Looking for panelists  
of all genders

883

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

years, increasing from 313,741 in 2021 to 688,882 in 2022. DART also received complaints from students, some of whom spoke at their board meetings. History senior Daniel Yahalom, president of the advocacy group Comets for Better Transit, said that the organization first started advocating for a frequency increase in fall 2022 after hearing that UTD and DART were undergoing negotiations to make changes to the route. Their efforts included circulating a student petition as well as asking Student Government to pass a resolution endorsing the change.

“DART’s board members don’t have a lot of direct experience with the passengers and what it’s like to take the system on a regular basis,” Yahalom said. “Beyond whatever ridership they do directly ... because of that, any sort of way to bring up our perspective to the board

members is really valuable, because they don’t get enough of it. And the most direct way of doing that is going to board meetings.”

Hunter said the standard 883 buses have a capacity of 37 people; they are not considered overcrowded until they consistently hit 150% capacity. However, there is an extra barrier to load counting for the route, as some of the 883 vehicles do not have Automatic Passenger Counters, which on DART buses count the number of people entering through the doors. As a result, ECHO drivers often must count passenger loads manually, which Yahalom said may not be as accurate as numbers gathered automatically. After experiencing the overcrowding firsthand, alumnus Connor Hulla was inspired to document the conditions by taking photos inside the 883 East during peak hours, which he submitted to Citizen Action Committee member Hexel Colorado.

“I actually rode it once and

saw how crowded the 883 east got, it was so full, people couldn’t get in,” Hulla said. “It was shoulder to shoulder, Tokyo subway levels of crowded.”

In the Aug. 9 staff meeting, Aquino said that the cost of the frequency increase for the pilot program was an additional \$245,000, which is split evenly between UTD and DART. This is about a 7% increase from the annual cost of running the Comet Cruiser, which Aquino estimated at \$3,266,966. Due to both parties splitting the cost, any changes to the 883 route require both of their agreement.

“Before we do anything, it has to be an agreement,” Hunter said. “It has to be a compromise, and it has to all be based on analysis. Ridership is gonna impact the students, and also not just the students, because with the contract, the 883 is an open system. That means not only UTD students can use it, DART customers can use it as well. We have to agree, or we



HRIDYA DHULIPALA | COURTESY

can’t do it. Period.”

Yahalom said he hopes the frequency increase will improve student flexibility and reduce road traffic. Along with Hulla, Yahalom said that students have a powerful ability to improve their community.

“You actually have a lot of influence on local level issues,” Hulla said. “Even doing something as simple as emailing a city council member about an issue can do so much. They will respond to you, and they will often do some action ... it’s very

small scale, it’s not like a federal-level thing where someone has a hundred thousand constituents. No. They don’t hear from a lot of people, so you can have a very powerful voice in local politics.”



SERGEANT BEN LOCKLEAR | COURTESY

MARINE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

enkamp said. “And I was really surprised when they first read my name. I’m also really happy that UTD will be recognized as part of the ceremony that will happen later this year.”

Heckenkamp thanked professor David Murchison, an Air Force veteran whose honors reading class sparked her interest in the military. He has extensive history with the armed forces, having served in the ROTC at the end of the Vietnam War and then as a dentist for the Air Force for 30 years.

“She was a National Merit Scholar, so she had a great academic background, but then she’s heavily involved in sports, obviously with UTD,” Murchison said. “She’s a very well-rounded young lady.”

Heckenkamp also thanked Captain Frances Moore, the selection officer for Dallas and East Texas for the Marine Corps, as well as her parents and fellow Marines for supporting her throughout the years. Moore said that she was one of the few Marines who has ever graduated with honors.

“She doesn’t necessarily see [an obstacle] as a roadblock, she sees it as a stepping stone, and that mindset and that critical thinking and that ability to maneuver in space ... it’s something that we don’t really see as often when people apply in general,” Moore said. “It’s like she knows what her ultimate end goal is.”

Marine Corps Base Quantico is a training ground that helps individuals develop strategies for U.S. Marine combat. Within MCB Quantico, Heckenkamp pursued the PLC course through two summers, with each summer session lasting six weeks. In 2022, Heckenkamp attended PLC juniors, and in 2023, she attended PLC seniors.

“I think grit and determination [is what] she personifies,” Murchison said. “[This is] what we look for in military officers in terms of potential for leadership.”

Heckenkamp has long wanted to serve in the military both for its higher purpose and for its travel opportunities. She also wanted to obtain a license to become a pilot, which is what drove her to choose the Marine Corps. However, this was not Heckenkamp’s first choice program; she applied to multiple

colleges and academies with flight programs but was rejected for medical reasons. Despite these obstacles, Heckenkamp was accepted into one of the most elite military special forces in the U.S, which she didn’t expect.

“PTs [physical tests] were outstanding and her leadership skills,” Moore said. “Her ability to handle a variety of tasks regardless of the level of friction that they may cause in her day ... That’s really what sets her apart.”

Heckenkamp qualified to start training in the Marine Corps after successfully completing several physical assessments, including a three mile run, individual performance in maximum pull-ups and planks, receiving approval from a panel of officers. In training, the performance of program members is evaluated in the areas of academics, leadership and physical fitness.

“If you don’t meet any of those standards, you are dropped, so PLC’s juniors are harder than seniors,” Heckenkamp said. “Over half of my platoon dropped out last time. But then for seniors, we started with 82 and 67 graduated, so it’s a lot easier to graduate from seniors.”

Now that she is back at UTD, Heckenkamp hopes to finish the year out strong. She is currently the president of the Association for Computing Machinery, which is the largest computer science program at UTD. Heckenkamp is also a senator of Student Government and currently taking an EMT course to become licensed at the end of the semester. Additionally, this will be her last year with UTD’s cross country team.

“When I came to UTD, I was not quite sure what I wanted to do,” Heckenkamp said. “So I tested a lot of things. I had a computer science major, I was also a Spanish minor and had a music minor, which I still have. I was also in the pre-law program, and now I’m in the pre-med program.”

Although the course was physically and mentally challenging, Heckenkamp enjoys the environment of the Marines programs.

“It’s a super uplifting culture, and it’s just full of great people who are super motivated, and they’re always there for you,” Heckenkamp said. “So just in general, thank you to all the Marines I’ve met along the way, and I’m super excited to meet more in the future.”

MILLER

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

days on the long-gone app Vine, where he produced iconic six-second videos.

Denise, who is also currently on tour, was featured on “Abbott Elementary,” performs stand-up comedy and is active on her Instagram and TikTok. Once a social worker in Chicago, Denise left for LA to pursue her dreams of comedy and acting. As the opening set for the show, Denise brought fresh, relatable humor to campus. Her interactions with the audience, sometimes putting a

student on the spot, were unexpectedly the highlights of her set. Though over a decade older than most of us, Denise knew all the latest humor, slang and memes, and left students like myself quickly searching up her Instagram later that night.

After a massive Kahoot game with over 800 students competing, the show moved on to the most anticipated set of the night. One of the first things Miller said after getting on stage was, “You guys are so lame,” prompted by the crowd’s excitement at his mere appearance before he had even

made a single joke. Surprisingly, Miller had done his research on UTD, as he threw around several remarks about the international population, computer science nerds and past library break-ins. His set was raunchy and vulgar – far more than his public content on social media. Some jokes left the audience confused on whether it was okay to laugh or not, proving that dark humor isn’t everyone’s cup of tea. Despite mixed reception as his edgier comedy, Miller’s show was wry, comical and absurd, making it simply unforgettable.



KAZI SHAFIN | PHOTO EDITOR

Over a thousand Comets packed the ATEC auditorium for Noel Miller's "EVERYTHING's F#&KED" set.



RUBEN RODRIGUEZ | MERCURY STAFF

HEALTH

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

practice and focuses on understanding healthcare at a deeper level. Matthew Lin, a public health sophomore, said that education level, socioeconomic status and local policy can influence health and healthcare, which is the primary focus of the program. As a pre-med student, Lin chose the major to

focus on health policy, though he also takes classes related to the sociology and economics of health.

“I know there’s a lot of doctors out there who are really smart in science, and they can do research, and they can do surgery, [but] there’s not that many people who kind of have an interdisciplinary appreciation for both the aspects and sensitivity of care that is health, and also

the structural and regulatory environment that is policy,” Lin said. “I want to become a doctor, I want to get that MD, but I want to use my MD to advocate for better health policy, potentially on a federal or a state or local level.”

EPPS Dean Jennifer Holmes said that the university has been working on creating a fast-track Master of Public Health degree, which would combine

undergraduate courses at UTD with graduate courses at an external school. The program is still under development, but if approved, it would likely take around five years for students to complete.

“I just can’t tell you how excited I am about this,” Holmes said. “I think it’s a really great offering for students. It has a defined career path. And it’s very flexible, so what’s fun for

our pre-med students is they don’t just have to be one major.”

Holmes said that it can be difficult to advertise a new degree because of the time it takes for the university to make the program a viable option for students. However, she has faith that a healthy amount of enrollment will follow due to interest in the public health minor and said that by next fall, EPPS will have a good idea of how big

the program will get. Currently, students can view the major and its required courses in the 2023 undergraduate catalog.

“This is a [historic] moment when public health has come into the public eye because of the events of the last few years,” Scotch said. “Health is not just about access to the health care system, it’s about the society in which we live and people’s culture.”

ATHENAEUM  
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

on an Asian design. When you look closely, you'll see it in the sunlight, it will sparkle like a pearl on campus, which I'm very excited about.”

The museum will include a large event space under a canopy on the first floor and galleries on the second floor, a loan from the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth in the lobby, followed by a staircase leading to the Crow gallery on its left and Bar gallery on the right. The second floor will also house a seminar room for workshops along with the Richard Brettell reading room.

“[The Bar gallery is] the complementary section of the museum that will hold a partnership installation with the Dallas Museum of Art, so we're bringing some of the treasures of our local city's art museum,” Hofland said. “In an exhibition curated by Dr. Michael Thomas at the Edith O'Donnell Institute of Art History ... it will celebrate the gifts of the Jonsson, Green, and McDermott families to the Dallas Museum of Art.”

The remaining space in the Bar gallery will be used for an incubator exhibition of Latin American art, which Hofland believes will be the second museum in the Athenaeum. The Crow gallery will showcase older art from religions still alive today, including Hinduism and Buddhism, infused with traditions of East, Southeast and

South Asian cultures. Hofland added that the museum will include a jade room — “a heartbeat of the collection” — which will comprise works that incorporate jade, a gemstone and symbol of prosperity in Chinese culture. Additionally, there are plans in the future to add an exhibition showcasing Islamic art as well.

“Our former curator, Jacqueline Chao, has written a new handbook for all of the opportunities we see here at UT Dallas academically,” she said. “It will give a little bit of history and a lot of overview of how the collection spans time and geography and religious and cultural contexts. As a technology campus, it's really important that we are on the daring edge of how technology enhances the visitor experience so we're partnering with the Bass school to work with students ... where we'll present digital works of art.”

Hofland said she and Natalia Di Pietrantonio, the Crow Museum's new curator, are currently working on the visitor experience and tying it back to the museum's theme of compassion and wonder. She also hopes that students, staff, and the public can hold and teach workshops, such as tai chi or ceramics, to destress from the busy world.

“We don't have time or space to wonder much, especially as a busy student, so can this museum be your place for sort of taking a deep breath and really asking questions,” Hofland said. “We want

our exhibitions to feel like you need to see them because what I want [is] the next time you visit to be a little bit different, and I think technology will help us create that kind of sense of urgency. I want this to be a portal to the world and so I believe these exhibitions will be so important for us to initiate dialogues.”

Hofland said that the museum will open doors to student employment including but not limited to a student advisory board, a student docent program, and student internship programs. She added that the museum will help students honor the intricacies of Asian art and culture regardless of their heritage. While Phase I will continue to undergo construction throughout the year, Phase II of the Athenaeum — a 680-seat performance hall — will simultaneously undergo construction as well.

“We're in the process now of designing this building [the performance hall] and adding it to the CIP, or capital improvement projects for the Board of Regents approval,” Jamison said. “The goal would be that this would be completed in the spring of '26. The fact that there will be an arts district that's anchored by a museum, a performance hall, and a plaza by which students, faculty and staff will have access is an extremely strong attraction for persons who are considering UTD as a STEAM university.”



MORPHOSIS ARCHITECTS | COURTESY  
Pictured is a rendering of one of the galleries showcasing objects from the collection. The light well diffuses light, allowing it to enter the gallery.



MORPHOSIS ARCHITECTS | COURTESY  
Rendering of the Richard Brettell reading room that will display Brettell's book collection.

RANSOMWARE  
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

data hasn't been compromised because this can cause stress ... maybe law enforcement doesn't want to alert attackers on what's going, or maybe they were doing some kind of investigation that may require [keeping] things under wraps, at least for some time.”

An attacker could gain more than just money from leaked data. According to The Dallas Morning

News, authorities believe that the attack was caused by an employee falling for a phishing scam. Kantarcioglu explained that in this case, medical information was leaked, which an attacker could use to craft increasingly detailed phishing scams in the future.

“With personal information, you may be able to draft [something] very convincing,” Kantarcioglu said. “For example, emails such as ‘Oh, I noticed that you have this outstanding medical balance on this treatment

that you have on this day.”

Fortunately, Kantarcioglu has advice on how students can protect their information in case of personal data leaks. He highly recommends students use a credit freeze, meaning that a credit bureau will not share a person's credit information with third parties. This stops identity thieves from opening new credit cards under the victim's name. Kantarcioglu also suggested that everyone keep at least two backups of their data on an ex-

ternal encrypted drive and regularly update it; this ensures that if ransomware affects your computer, your data can be restored. He mentioned that he personally has two terabytes of external hard drive space for this reason.

“It kind of looks scary, but you know, if you take precautions, the risks will be minimal, especially with credit freeze and not clicking [links],” Kantarcioglu said.

Kantarcioglu said that, similarly,

the key to protecting institutional data is making frequent backups. He also advises organizations to not pay the ransom demanded by attackers like Royal. The IBM Cost of a Data Breach report stated that organizations that paid the ransom during an attack only achieved a 2.2% difference in cost. Instead, the wisest response is to identify the device the virus has infiltrated and isolate it from surrounding networks to prevent its spread.

“I think that students, especially computer science students, [should] take cybersecurity-relevant classes,” Kantarcioglu said. “Once you have the fundamentals like good programming, and some fundamentals in data science and AI, you can do research or you can go to companies. Since now we are in the age of big data and AI, and it's impacting every area, students must also have some background on [cybersecurity].”

BARBIE  
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

job is beach. No, not a lifeguard. Beach. Things are wonderful in this supposed paradise until Barbie learns her owner in the Real World is struggling. With Barbie's idyllic land threatened, we join her and Ken as she travels to the outside to prevent herself from falling apart; the bubbly and up-

beat protagonist enters the Real World assuming that female empowerment is the norm.

That assumption shatters the instant she arrives. Swept into a world of patriarchy, instead of instantly commanding respect, Barbie must fight to be heard alongside her male counterparts. Similarly, Ken begins to question his existence as a beach-loving himbo.

Most women can relate to the experiences depicted in the "Barbie" movie like catcalling and everyday disrespect. Many who did not enjoy the film like to bring up the exaggerated depictions of misogyny in 2023, but let's face it: most passionate critics of the "Barbie" movie are men. And it's easy to ignore the stellar detail work behind the framing of the plot when you have already en-

tered the theater with an antagonistic mindset.

After all, when the patriarchy finds its way back to Barbie Land, the entire land is turned on its head. The Kens take charge and turn the Barbies passive and unambitious. Their homes turn into “mojo dojo casa houses” where Kens mansplain and wear mink coats suspiciously evocative of Andrew Tate. Influenced by the Real

World, Barbie Land goes from one extreme to another. If men weren't the bad guys before, they sure are now. Right?

Wrong.

Barbie Land is meant to serve as a parallel opposite universe to our world, prompting the question of, “What if women were in charge?” Many critics of the movie find the concept of Barbie Land rather radical. Some might even support

the Kens in their rebellion. What they don't realize is that it is just an inverse of our world. Gerwig doesn't create this stark contrast to advocate for complete woman takeover. In fact, her intentionality highlights the truth of the matter: superiority of one gender over another will lead to constant dissatisfaction. The only option is equality. Unequivocally.

TRUMP  
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

We need to seek independent journalism that informs us instead of entertains us. We need to reframe politics as a fight for our future, not just more celebrity drama to joke about and then

forget. We need to stop prioritizing the loudest voices in the room just because it is easy.

All of that takes work, of course. It is far easier to laugh at politics as a detached outsider than to invest yourself in it and risk feeling fear, shame or heartbreak. But while

the game is corrupt and out of our hands, that doesn't mean we don't play it. We just have to change our strategy, even if it takes time and effort. Otherwise, regular people will suffer as our government decays.

Don't let your political involve-

ment start and end with memes. If political figureheads are so useless or foolish that it makes you laugh, channel that incredulity into helping build a respectable society instead. And you don't need to join a political party. There's soup kitchens, hospitals seeking vol-

unteers, local nonprofits doing tangible things for real people. Charities may not jump out at you the way the latest scandal of the week does, because they are not here to entertain. They are here to work, and we can, too.

Community by community,

we can tear ourselves away from media sensationalism that empowers clowns and focus instead on what is important: finding facts, helping others and making change.

I don't want to live in a circus. Do you?

RESUME  
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

scammed. Organization names and titles still sit pretty on the grinder's resume, but they are non-entities. They don't host events or help anyone, or if they do, they are so dysfunctional it hurts. UTD is no stranger to these ghost organizations; how many clubs have pathetically faded like this? Either from laziness or, more commonly, the grinder-comprised officer board's inability to spare time and energy to make something great?

As a student org enthusiast, I have personally witnessed too

many clubs fall due to unmet commitments. And as a club officer, I have seen what goes on behind the scenes: too many officers with too little time, always looking to unload their work onto someone else. I do not blame anyone; it is rarely a function of laziness. Rather, it happens when entire organizations capsize to the grinder mentality, where the only reason to run a club is to fill a “Volunteer Experience” slot.

Behind the scenes of some of UTD's most prolific and well-known clubs, one idea reigns supreme: every officer needs to be devoutly committed to the

organization outside of school, work and other life demands. Everyone must work long, hard hours to not only sustain the club, but to improve it and build in failsafes for its longevity. Most importantly, the passion and energy driving the club should burst forth from everyone, not a lone visionary drowning in a sea of “too busy this week” and “maybe later” messages from their colleagues.

Everything fun on campus will decay if the only people running it are grinders. If UTD wants to be more exciting and welcoming, we must stop overstuffing our resumes and start

chasing our passions. We need people with the time, energy and focus to do great things on our officer boards. And we cannot just wait for those people. We must become those people.

For students nervous about joining a club that may be run by under-committed grinders, many officers I've spoken with have advice. Every recommendation focuses on spotting effort. Are they active and responsive on social media? Are their events well-organized and crafted with care? Do they make new members feel included? Do they have concretely detailed plans for the year? Sometimes


clubs fall short or overextend themselves, but an occasional mistake is easily distinguished from a parade of red flags. If passion, growth and effort are demonstrated, you can trust they will not fall apart once things get busy.

And if you are applying for officer positions, do not be scared away by someone else's thick resume. Increasingly, leadership teams are noticing that people involved in several activities often are not as committed as those with less experience but more passion. If something lights a fire in your heart, and you are willing to put the


time in to learn, you are just as good a contender as a grinder. Stay a visionary with a dream and the power to execute it. We need more of that at UTD.

This semester, do not overschedule yourself in the name of “the grind” or “well-roundedness.” Pick one cause and commit to it. You will be surprised how much you can grow and help others through just one role.


Everywhere you look on campus, you see a jack of all trades. But it is far more impressive to start a bright-eyed, hopeful novice and become a master of one.



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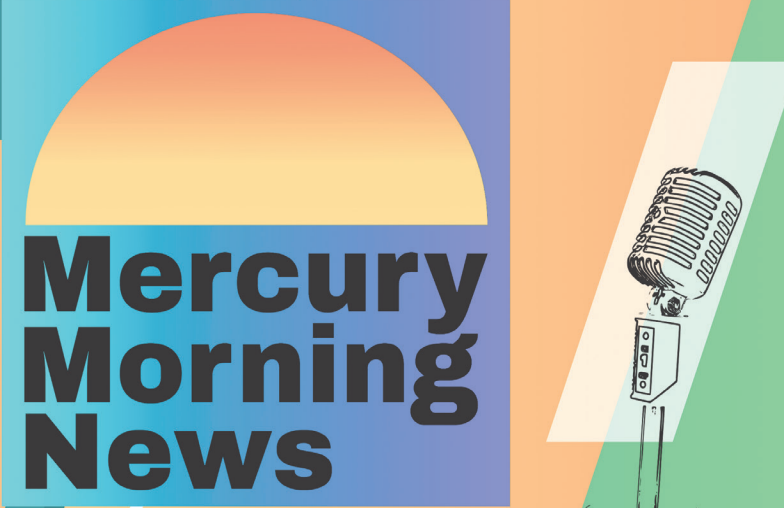
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